

Apr. 6 / Administration of William J. Clinton, 2000

have certainly asserted my right here tonight. But I think we should take another moment to honor that essential freedom, to recognize that vital principle, by asking the members of the McLaughlin Group to stand. [Laughter]

Let me say to all of you, I really am okay most days about not being President next year. And it will be nice for all of you to have someone else to chew on. But I have loved coming to this dinner, and I have been privileged to come every year but one that I have been here. I have enjoyed all my interactions with you, the battles, the agreements, the disagreements, the probing, the jabbing, even the occasional bloodshed. And believe it or not, I appreciate the efforts you make to bring Washington's world to the world beyond Washington. I know it's important; I know it's difficult.

I've tried to keep you entertained, and I've tried to keep you involved. [Laughter] And I hope you've at least had some pretty good, substantive things to write about for the last 7-plus years. But for all you have done, and especially once a year for giving me, and indeed all of us, the chance to have a good laugh, I thank you very, very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:34 p.m. in the Ballroom at the Washington Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to John Nolen, president, Radio and Television Correspondents Association; actor Leonardo DiCaprio; David Westin, president, ABC News; Gov. George W. Bush of Texas; Mayor Rudolph Giuliani of New York City; and author Patrick Buchanan.

## Memorandum on Leadership of the Emergency Response Assistance Program

April 6, 2000

*Memorandum for the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, Director, Office of Management and Budget, Director of Central Intelligence, Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Assistant to the President for Science and Technology, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Director, United States Secret Service*

*Subject:* Designation of the Attorney General as the Lead Official for the Emergency Response Assistance Program Under Sections 1412 and 1415 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1997 (Public Law 104-201) (the "Act")

Under sections 1412(a) and 1415(a) of the Act, the Secretary of Defense is responsible for implementing the Emergency Response Assist-

ance Program, commonly known as the "Domestic Preparedness Program," to provide civilian personnel of Federal, State, and local agencies with training and expert advice regarding emergency responses to a use or threatened use of a weapon of mass destruction or related materials, and for testing and improving the responses of such agencies to emergencies involving chemical or biological weapons and related materials.

Under the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including sections 1412(a)(2) and 1415(d)(1) of the Act, I designate the Attorney General to replace the Secretary of Defense as the lead Federal official with responsibility for carrying out these programs.

These designations are effective October 1, 2000, and constitute designations pursuant to sections 1412(a)(2) and 1415(d)(1) of the Act.

The Attorney General is authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: The memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 7. It was not received for publication in the *Federal Register*.

## Remarks on Signing the Senior Citizens' Freedom to Work Act of 2000 April 7, 2000

Thank you. Let me say, first of all, to Flo Mallonee, I thought she did a great job. Her family must be very proud of her. And if you get tired of the job you're in, you might consider elected office. [*Laughter*]

I'd like to welcome all the former Social Security Commissioners here and say a special word of appreciation to our current Commissioner, Ken Apfel, and Deputy Commissioner Bill Halter. I'd also like to acknowledge the contributions of Jim Roosevelt, until recently the Associate Commissioner for Retirement Policy at the Social Security Administration, something that would have made his grandfather very proud of him; and former Representative Barbara Kennelly of Connecticut, who is the current Associate Commissioner for Retirement Policy.

There are many leaders of the aging community here today; I welcome them. But most of all, I want to welcome this very large delegation from the United States Congress, and at risk of—if I forget anybody, do not be shy. But my notes say that present here today are: Chairman Bill Archer; our minority whip, David Bonior; Representative Ben Cardin from Maryland; Representative Mac Collins from Georgia, who is here with his granddaughter who is happy that her grandfather can continue to work into his later years—[*laughter*—Representative Joe Crowley from New York; Representative Sam Johnson from Texas; Representative Sandy Levin from Michigan; Representative John Lewis from Georgia; Representative Ron Lewis from Kentucky; Representative Bob Matsui from California; Representative Jim Ramstad from Minnesota; our subcommittee chair, Representative Clay Shaw from Florida; Representative John Spratt from South Carolina; Representative Jerry Weller from Illinois. I don't think I've missed anybody. And you should give them all a big hand; they did a fabulous job. [*Applause*]

Over 7 years ago now, when I took office, the Vice President and I made a commitment to a 21st century vision of America, with oppor-

tunity and responsibility for all American citizens and a community of all American citizens. To do it we thought we would have to reward both work and family and create a Government that would borrow less and invest more. For 7 years, we've worked hard on that.

Today, the size of the Government is about what it was in 1960, 40 years ago, thanks in large measure to higher productivity from the Federal work force and the advent of new technologies. Thanks to strong cooperative efforts in the Congress, we have turned record deficits into surpluses, and we've enjoyed the longest economic expansion in history.

We've tried to find ways to reward work and family, doubling the earned-income tax credit for working families with modest means, passing the Family and Medical Leave Act, improving the college loan program, and providing tax credits for college costs that were never there before, and many other initiatives. But we know, increasingly, how we deal with Social Security will be a test of our commitment to family and, increasingly, to work.

In the 65 years since President Roosevelt signed it into law, Social Security has dramatically transformed the lives of older and disabled Americans. Seniors were once the poorest people in America. Today, thanks to Social Security, they are the least likely to live in poverty. In spite of the fact that many seniors enjoy other sources of income, if there were no Social Security in America, almost half the seniors in the country would be below the poverty line.

Thanks to Social Security, many of our seniors have a level of independence that few older Americans could even have dreamed of 65 years ago. And thanks to Social Security, we Americans continue to uphold the sacred compact between the generations.

But FDR himself said, and I quote, that "Social Security represents a cornerstone in a structure which is by no means complete," and that "new conditions impose new requirements upon